



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

HINTS  
FROM THE  
PEN  
TO THE  
TONGUE



600034395U

42.

751.

Tales



H I N T S

FROM THE

P E N T O T H E T O N G U E.

---

"SHE OPENETH HER MOUTH WITH WISDOM; AND ON  
HER TONGUE IS THE LAW OF KINDNESS."

PROV. XXXI. 26.

---

BY A LADY.

---

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY G. AND J. DYER,  
24, PATERNOSTER-ROW;  
AND E. SOUL,  
26, TABERNACLE-WALK, FINSBURY-SQUARE.

---

1842.

751.



## HINTS

FROM THE

### PEN TO THE TONGUE.

---

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the grapes.”

CANTICLES ii. 15.

---

ON a rising ground, commanding an extensive valley, and adjoining a small secluded village, stood an old-fashioned building,—long, low-roofed, and irregular,—yet presenting that indescribable appearance of stability and repose which characterizes the antique homes of England, where posterity enjoy the labours of their forefathers, sheltered by “old ancestral trees.”

The hereditary acres were not numerous, but consisted of several small farms, the rentals of which furnished a moderate independency; and the simple but refined tastes of the inmates, and



their benevolence of disposition, commanded the reverence and affectionate respect of their neighbours. The family was small; yet their busy social habits kept up a constant appearance of life and cheerfulness. All that belonged to the Hall was of continual interest to the humble villagers. They carefully scanned every change of gravelled walk, or new plantation; and were delighted when fortunate enough to catch the glance of pleasant faces peeping from bower or casement.

One fine autumnal afternoon the Hall presented the appearance of more than usual order. It seemed as if basking in the clear sun-light, which gleamed on the wreathed chimney-shafts, and marked in strong relief the grotesque figures of the carved work. In a quaint projection of the building was a latticed window, filled with good old sweet-smelling flowers; not the newcomers, with long and Latin names so hard to be pronounced. To that one window such flowers only were welcomed as our grandmothers knew and loved,—meet companions for the rose, the stock, and the pink.

The casement stood wide open, and within

were seen two ladies, busily engaged ; the elder knitting, the younger sewing. The latter plied her needle with great rapidity ; yet her countenance expressed profound reverie. It was easy to perceive that her imagination wandered into far distant regions.

“ Sybilla ! ” said her companion, “ you are unusually silent. ” Sybilla started ; and, smiling at the emphasis on the word “ unusually, ” replied, “ My thoughts have been wandering to the ends of the earth ; now glancing rapidly over the cities of Europe, then lingering by the solemn woods and vast lakes of America ; anon to the sunny isles of the south and east ; then home again, where by-gone days and voices long silent are recalled, in softened reflection. One idea in particular vividly strikes me. Whether in central Europe, where in Teutonic accents Germany tells her pensive mystic musings ; or on the green isles of the Pacific, where words are soft as the gentle zephyrs ; or in continental Asia, where the richly ornate language is as flowers wreathed with pearls ;—wherever the human voice is heard, that voice has power to awaken the deepest and most thrilling of all

vibrations in the human heart. And I longed for the time when *a word* shall be the certain harbinger of moral good,—the constant messenger of love.”

“Your musings have been pleasant,” replied the matron. “This poetry of the heart seems the peculiar privilege of virtuous and elegant seclusion, and may become, subordinately, a refreshing preparative for active social duties. Friends are coming to visit you; and I trust that some rays from the spirit of love and beauty, the sunshine of the universe, will cheer the small circle around you. It is time, however, that we part awhile, to complete our arrangements.”

Sybilla was soon after seen standing alone at the garden-gate, with one hand shading her brow from the afternoon sun, the other holding down her muslin apron, which, wafted by the wind, seemed bent on despoiling the flowers entwining the rustic trellis-work. But no one appearing in sight, she slowly re-entered the house, and seated herself near the window of the pleasant parlour, in which she hoped soon to welcome her guests.

In the window stood a small antique table of carved oak, whose elaborate ornaments concealed two sliding drawers, used as the ready receptacles of bills, notes, and other small memoranda, which orderly ladies find so valuable, but which prove such thorns in the path of the negligent. Unless arranged with care, they are ever oozing out at the front, or slipping down at the back, of the over-filled drawers; making their appearance at the most unlucky juncture; or else, when wanted, they lie concealed in some queer corner, like mischievous sprites who have purposely hidden themselves.

On the table stood a beautiful inkstand, greatly valued by its mistress, and kept in the nicest order. The sight of it now suddenly recalled to her mind certain items of expenditure, which she was in the habit of faithfully recording; considering it an act of wisdom to keep exact account of the manner in which the talent of money is employed.

Taking her accompt-book from the drawer, and selecting a swan's quill, which was a peculiar favourite, she made the intended entries,

and then paused for recollection. The pen, meanwhile, reclined against the side of the ink-stand, with the point uppermost, and the plume was reflected on the polished table.

For an account of what followed, we are indebted to the lady's own narrative; and, if there be other fair damsels to whom the relation may afford pleasure, or profit, we commend it to their perusal.

## SYBILLA'S NARRATIVE.

## DIALOGUE WITH THE PEN.

HAVING laid down the pen, I closed my eyes for more attentive consideration. Peculiarly deep and sweet was the feeling of repose which gradually stole over me. Intending, however, to resume my employment, I was greatly surprised by a strange appearance in my pen. The good old quill had of late shown an inclination to open his nib wider than I quite approved ; but now it looked like the opening beak of a bird : the ink flowed back from the strange aperture ; and soon I heard a sweet low voice, such as nursery tales attribute to the fairies.

“Mistress,” said the soft voice, “your bouquet looks beautiful. That rich pyramid of dahlias, relieved by the sprigs of clematis, presents a fine contrast of form and colours ; and

the magnificent bunch of 'love lies bleeding,' which droops so gracefully over the snowy mantel-piece, seems looking down on the late summer rose, which has fallen on the hearth-rug."

To this address I gave a nod of assent.

"You have been a kind mistress to me," continued the Pen; "and, as you are alone, I wish to express my gratitude, and to offer a few hints which may be useful, and, perhaps, more welcome than the lectures of some graver personage."

Here followed another inclination of my head. This nod, however, differed from the former. With eyes closed, and chin declining, the head took a gentle curve towards the right, and then hastily resumed its former erect position. My little plumed friend began now to talk in right earnest.

"I thank you," said he, "for your care of my comfort, and character; and for your sincere desire to employ me only in what you deem good and useful. You have endeavoured to preserve the beauty of my form, and the clearness and vigour of my movements. Often,

while travelling firmly and steadily along your good old-fashioned 'Bath post,' I have pitied my brethren in their journeys over the 'superfine satin,'—slipping and sliding, like boors on a marble pavement. When you have employed me to convey messages of friendship, or business, great has been your anxiety that I should acquit myself with propriety; and, methinks, if some of your friends could peep into your desk, they would smile to see how often you have started me on an errand, and then, thinking I did not go off in a style worthy of welcome, have made me set out afresh. When laughed at for this preciseness, you quote Dr. Johnson's remark: 'a letter is a calm and deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, and the stillness of solitude.' Hence, you argue the two-fold error of recording any sentiment that could needlessly grieve a friend, or awaken one evil and foolish thought. Never have I found you regretting this caution."

"Assuredly not," I replied; "what is written is so clear and lasting a record of thought, that it has become a vulgar proverb, 'Take care what you put down in black and white.'"



“ Yes, lady ! but there is another mode of expressing thought, more rapid and constant in motion than the pen,—‘ a tameless tell-tale of the soul,’—one who carries his communications, not to a perishable sheet of paper, but lodges them directly in the judgment, the conscience, and the memory of him to whom they are addressed. Do you always use due caution in employing this messenger ? ”

“ The tongue ! ” I exclaimed ; and after pausing a moment in profound silence, remarked, that I disapproved, and regretted foolish, unguarded words : but, said quickly, “ Surely you do not think that I indulge in any evil conversation ? ”

“ I have no intention,” replied the Pen, “ to charge you with any of the grosser evils of the tongue. Those, I believe, you shun with sacred care ; but there are minor faults to be avoided : and, in reference to these, your conversation may perhaps admit of improvement.”

“ You would not charge me, I hope, with any of the forms of slander, or tale-bearing ;—vices which, I am aware, have been deemed the bane of our sex ? ”

“ I think you, Mistress, remarkably free from both. And the whole circle of your intimate acquaintance is comparatively blameless in these respects. Naturalists tell us that every species of worm, or fly, keeps to that sort of leaf, and tree, which forms its peculiar food, and appropriate shelter. Where the latter grow the different tribes may be found in swarms, while other spots are free. Hence, your happy dwelling is free from the whole class of whisperers, tale-bearers, and backbiters. Indeed, if the mistress of the house possess a contented spirit, a benevolent and thoughtful mind, with diligent habits, and a love of reading, she may keep her own domain tolerably clear of this nuisance. The motto which St. Augustine inscribed on his dining-table, will be found, without art or design, graven on the walls of her abode :

‘ Whoever loves at absent fame to jeer  
May hence depart ; no room for him is here.’ ”

“ Well,” I said, “ I think it was justly remarked by Madame de Montesson, that,

‘independently of all principle, evil speaking always spoils the manners of a woman.’”

“True : but when we look at the amount of real and lasting evil resulting from it, the subject is a mournful one. In this valley of tears, where the pilgrims so deeply need the honey and balm of mutual aid and affectionate sympathy, it is sad, indeed, when gall and wormwood drop from a woman’s lips. Sad is it when the social circle becomes a laboratory for the distillation of bitter waters, or of deadly poison. Where this spirit is indulged, woe to those who are on the outside of the magic ring ! Woe to the absent friend, whose unsuspecting hospitality has admitted these weird sisters to the fatal power of carrying away scraps of conversation, or familiar conduct, round which to weave the web of the cockatrice. The superstitious tell us that witches conjure up appearances of the absent, for the gratification of the malevolent, or the satisfaction of the inquisitive, and the injured. They add, that the persons so ‘called up,’ suffer intensely at the time. But the victims of these more polished servants of the evil one are the while unconscious. Yet

the blight on character and credit appears anon,—and then comes the anguish.”

“Yes: and, however numerous may be the innocent victims of this kind of detraction, an affinity prevails amongst those who have any dealings with this spirit, that is sure to bring round the mischief. Every appetite must be fed with its appropriate food; and animals, which are addicted to bite and devour, are tolerably certain, in the end, to bite and devour one another. Perchance, while one party violates the laws of charity in one place, those of whom they speak, may, at the same moment, and at no great distance, be speaking of them. Both parties may, though unconsciously to each other, be setting their seal with a heavy hand to this award. ‘With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.’ At all events, none have so fair a chance of escaping detraction as those who are strangers to its spirit, and who fly its associates. The laws both of wisdom and kindness enjoin the solemn disapproval of this vice in every form.”

“Guard, at the same time, against praising absent persons too highly. By a retributive law of truth, exaggeration is eventually sure to lessen the object it had falsely magnified. There is ever a tendency in erroneous opinion to rebound. When character has been unduly elevated, it naturally falls; and, sinking below its proper level, becomes unduly depressed. But there are also faults, lighter in themselves,” continued the Pen, “which, nevertheless, tend to dishonour the absent; and should be carefully avoided by a generous and delicate mind. Certain writers, in the ‘Land of Thought,’ as Madame de Staël has named Germany, have characterized a tendency to a depreciative style of speaking, as contrary to beauty and economy of mind,—a proof of onesidedness. We may add, that he who needlessly pourtrays any of the imperfections of his fellow-creatures, foolishly and wastefully perpetuates, and multiplies, unlovely images. It were well to avoid even those little lowering appellatives which, without any real ill-will, are often used when speaking of others. The language employed concerning the absent should in all things be a clear,

though softened reflection, of the courtesy shown them when present. Hence I have always admired those lines in the allegorical song of the Fairies, entitled, *Of* and *To* :—

*To* : ' I'm a little polished sprite,  
With graceful step and figure light.  
Where politeness keeps her school,  
I have learned each gentle rule ;  
While Hypocrisy, the teacher,  
Trimly deck'd each smiling feature.'

*Of* : ' I'm a rude and lawless elf,  
By my will I've school'd myself ;  
Ne'er would I my limbs confine  
In education's hated line :  
Quiet when my object's present ;  
When he turns, then I am pleasant :  
Mischievous at times, I grant it ;  
Murderous if my patrons want it.'

*To* : ' Thus we dance away the hours !  
Now 's the time to show our powers,  
For we've often heard it said,  
When the Christians get a-head  
They will *Of* and *To* remove,  
And place them in the school of love.  
*To* instructed there shall be,  
By mild and firm Sincerity ;

While, under Charity, fair teacher,  
*Of* shall be a different creature ;  
And each will be so like his brother,  
You will not know us from each other.'

*Chorus*: 'Mortal! mortal! now adieu,  
Take your leave of *Of* and *To* ;  
And hail from far that happy day,  
When *Of* shall seal what *To* shall say.'

"Very good," I remarked ; "we are quite agreed concerning backbiters. But what do you think of contradictors and fault-finders, as they are called: persons who compliment their own honesty, for the freedom and readiness with which they censure those present?"

"I think there is not half the need of those ungracious offices, which some people surmise. Parents, guardians, and all persons devoted to the office and duty of instruction, must of course teach, admonish, and reprove. It will be their privilege to do this at the time, and in the manner, the least painful to the feelings, and the least offensive to the pride, of the reprovèd. But,——"

"What!" I asked, hastily interrupting him,  
"do you take part with wounded pride? I

thought that we should give no quarter to pride, either in ourselves or others."

My question was quietly answered by another: "What do you conceive to be the proper antidote of pride?"

"Humility, of course," I replied.

"Exactly so: but these inflictions rouse a feeling, which is a mixture of anger, shame, and pain. Is that humility?"

"There is a shade of difference," I replied slowly.—"But are we not guilty of pampering the pride of others when we allow their good opinion of themselves to remain unchecked?"

"Their good opinion of themselves!" he exclaimed, with a laugh which lightly shook his plume.

"Why do you laugh?" I enquired; yet could not help laughing myself at the arch manner in which he repeated my words.

"I was smiling," said he, "at the grave aspect which self-love assumes when pretending to cure vanity in another. There are indeed painful instances of self-deception, concerning character and conduct, which require serious warning. There are shadows over-hanging the mind,



which should at all hazards be dispelled by the stern light of truth. But rest assured that, in general, people are far more conscious of their own defects than they appear to be. There is much truth in the remark, that we can seldom tell any one of a fault, for which conscience and common sense have not before reproved him. Besides, in this age of character-painting and analysis, there is scarcely a moral fault, or an obliquity in temper, habit, or conversation, which has not been amply pourtrayed in some pleasant fiction, or truthful essay. In these, as in a mirror, the fair reader may detect each fault and blemish, when no human eye can mark the conscious blush, and when no heart, save her own, can know what skilful hand hath touched the secret springs of her failings and defects. And I may add, that they who, by bold and coarse reproof, seek to mortify the pride of others, pursue a course of conduct as opposed to reason and benevolence, as the Dentist who should spend all his efforts to vex and disturb a tender tooth, which he has no hope of extracting.

“With fault-finders,” he continued, “you classed contradictors; and indeed they are closely

allied. The habit of contradicting, for contradiction's sake, is much more frequent and mischievous than most people suspect. There are ladies who in their small affairs, like lawyers in weightier matters, will argue for either side. There is in the human mind an innate approval of concord ; and, at the same time, there lurks in the human heart a perpetual tendency to discord. Apart from the evils which these discordant answerings again bring on wives, children, and servants, in the freedom and undress of domestic life, they are a source of perpetual and needless annoyance amongst friends. Many a holiday-garb has been rent by them, and the wearer has scarcely known how or why it happened. What is still more to be regretted, they often surround upright and virtuous persons, like a set of bristles, and cause the sensitive and timorous mind to shrink and retire within its innermost foldings. Many a correct opinion, many a noble and generous sentiment, have been repressed in silence from a dread of these ungracious replies. Much also of the innocently entertaining intercourse of life has been chilled and blighted by this pretended virtue."

“But you surely would not recommend a fawning, insipid assent to all that is said ;—a real or pretended casting of our own opinions in the mould of every mind with which we come in contact ? ”

“Certainly not ; but I would recommend all such persons to ask their own hearts, how often latent vanity, ill-will, irritability of temper, tyranny of heart, and even disingenuousness, have, in unsuspected forms, mixed themselves with the sharp negations of the views and opinions of others : and how often the tartly uttered, ‘ No, it is not ; ’—‘ I am not so sure of that ; ’—‘ You are wrong there,’ &c. &c. ; have proved the watchwords and starting points for disputes, seldom carried on without some evil passion being awakened or inflamed.”

“ Well,” I remarked, “ I had never attached so much importance to this subject ; but now I remember that a peculiarly unamiable expression of countenance often accompanies these little inelegant interludes. I have sometimes, indeed, suspected that a mixture of envy might enter into the feeling which dictated them ; for I have found them rife amongst those whose

relative position allowed few other chances of mortifying the persons addressed. And now, having given your opinion of the coarser forms of blame and opposition, pray what do you think of the giver of hints?"

"There are cases in which wisdom and love and gentleness may lead truth to appear in a veiled form, and to approach by an indirect path. But most frequently the gentle hint is the product of cowardice, double-mindedness, and a very unloving spirit. These little sharpshooters in ambush wound and irritate the refined and delicate spirit. Their arrows are thrown away on bold and coarser minds. And, in any case, a person is seldom reformed by being talked *at*."

"Your observations, I perceive, have been hitherto confined principally to those expressions of sentiment which relate to our judgment one of another."

"Yes," he replied; "and who can tell how much of human peace and happiness depends on this very point? Who can tell how many delicate touches would beautify a course of solid beneficence, if the precept, 'honour all men,'

had its due influence on all occasions, to prevent the harsh surmises and contemptuous regards which so frequently steal forth and embitter the converse of life? Besides, the manners re-act on the heart. As license too generally promotes wilfulness, so, where self-government is imposed, the internal feelings are kept to a certain extent in harmony with this restraint. Were it otherwise, the courtesies which fear or self-interest prompts, in stations of dependency, would become an intolerable burden. My intention, however, was not to comment on others, but to offer advice and services to yourself. Allow me, therefore, to make a few inquiries :—Do you number any children amongst your expected visitors? ”

“ Yes ; several.”

“ Then I hope you will be vigilant in observing the spirit and tendency of all you say.”

“ Why so? they are very little children.”

“ That is the precise reason which calls for your care. The moral sense of little children is exceedingly delicate and susceptible; and, in all that affects it, they are fearfully unforgetting. Those children, too young to join in the con-

versation, and apparently amusing themselves with other subjects, will be nevertheless the most attentive listeners; and a lifelong bias towards a particular good or evil may be the effect of some of your casual remarks. When you arranged your posy, how difficult you found it to alter the position of the stiff, full-grown flowers; but the young tender buds, it was but to move a tendril or leaflet, and they receded into shadow, or stood forward to view, just as you wished. It is a dangerous error to undervalue the power of external influences on the plastic mind of a child. Can you not recollect effects produced on your own mind in childhood, by the unguarded conversation of persons of riper years?"

"I do, indeed, remember being a very attentive observer of what grown persons said to each other. What was said to myself appeared, generally, as a speech made up for a child. I received with grave attention the customary lessons and charges, to share my pleasures and my small possessions with others; to give up my own will; and, especially to shun every form of disguise, and every degree of falsehood. But I

was much perplexed by hearing the very persons who thus lectured me, occasionally congratulating themselves, or one another, on some successful display of selfishness or obstinacy ; or on some little artifice in which they had triumphed. The complimentary language, also, addressed to persons whom I had heard decried in their absence, made a painful impression on my mind ; for I retained, on seeing such persons, the feelings excited by what I had last heard concerning them. I was once exceedingly disconcerted, when a child, by a lady who had promised me a trifling present, making her appearance at the given time without it. In many persons this would not have surprised me, even at that age ; but children are keen observers of character. I had noticed in that excellent lady so much of serious kindness, and such strict regard to truth, that the broken promise did not by any means assort with my ideas of her general conduct ; and I had no apprehension of a failure of memory in such a case. To my surprise and delight, she shortly afterwards brought the promised gift ; making many apologies, and expressing deep

concern at the forgetfulness which had delayed it. The bystanders deprecated those apologies and regrets, as quite needless to a child, and especially now, when the promise was redeemed. The lady, however, remarked with great emphasis: 'I have a sacred dread of all falsehood, even the falsehood of negligence; and especially to a little child.' I have never forgotten the deep tones of the rich mellow voice in which the last words were spoken.

"Let me, then, on the ground of these reminiscences, simple in themselves, yet clearly illustrating my meaning, commend to your diligent and self-denying caution, the first impressions of the little listeners of this afternoon. And, allow me further to enquire, do any aged persons visit you this evening?"

"Some I expect who are very aged."

"Then you will have a fine opportunity of showing the most delicate and respectful kindness. You may suggest many sweet and cheerful thoughts, which shall be as a cordial to the chilled heart of age."

"Yes; and where this can be effected, I shall do it with heartfelt pleasure; but it were



useless to attempt it in all cases. Some whom I expect this evening are really almost childish ; they are dull, and deaf, and peevish. A comfortable meal, and an easy chair, seem all that can be offered them ; and, without intending it unkindly, I think their families would do better to leave them at home ; for their presence serves only to lessen the pleasures of others."

" Is that *your* voice, my gentle Mistress ? Surely you can have no pleasures that contradict the moral feelings, and make you indifferent to the pure and gentle dictates of nature. Why, then, indulge a style of talking, too common indeed with the thoughtless and vain, but which reason and all right feeling condemn ? Whatever connects man with the past, or allies him with the future, is justly regarded with interest by the children of men. The ancient oak, which, withered and decayed, still spreads its bare arms to the summer's sky and the winter's blast, is universally venerated, simply because it has cast its shadows on successive generations, and is become the patriarch of surrounding plantations, reared from its acorns. This superannuated old man and decrepid

matron have lost the powers of action and enjoyment; yet they linger in life, when all seems labour and sorrow;—a burden to themselves and to others. But fatal may be the day of their removal. They founded the family. For half a century, at least, they governed all its affairs. They adapted its style of living, formed its habits, and sustained its connexions. Great changes cannot be made so long as they live. But, when death calls them away, all restraint is removed. New connexions are formed; the house is refitted and refurnished; and a new and more agreeable style of living is adopted. Property has changed hands; and new schemes and speculations are presented. How often has the death of a venerable old couple proved the ruin of a family, by opening to them dreams of prosperity and happiness, never to be realized! The weight of their helpless, and apparently useless, lives was just the ballast required to steady the family bark."

" You mistake me, if you think that I could wish the lives of the good old people shortened; or that I would willingly deprive them of any gratification they are capable of appreciating."

“ But who is to determine what may afford gratification to the aged and infirm? This is surely not the standard that love and kindness would erect; nor could true benevolence adopt a rule on which mistake, or relaxation of duty, must be peculiarly painful. Have you never marked the unavailing tears shed by youth and health over the grave of venerated friends and ancestors? Were you never moved by those vain regrets, that counted up the many simple, but precious, acts of kind attention that might have been performed, but were thoughtlessly delayed, until death had sealed up the departed from all the approaches of tender love? Light and easy, however, are the duties which devolve on young persons, in occasional contact with age and infirmity. A cheerful, yet respectful, manner; patience to listen to a story, which, though heard before, is perhaps well worthy of its seventh repetition; a little attention to those tastes and feelings, which become increasingly child-like and simple; and, behold, the spirit of the aged is gladdened, while the heart of the youthful is improved. Have you never seen a kind intelligent youth, or gentle-hearted

maiden, turn to the chair where the old man was sitting, in neglected silence ; and, in a clear mellow voice, pour into the dulled ear a few well-chosen words, which instantly awoke attention to life's few remaining treasures,—revived some pleasant recollection of the past,—or presented some object to which the heart still clung ? The clouded brow has at once relaxed, and the dimmed eye, recovering a degree of its former lustre, has blessed the welcome speaker ! ”

“ I have seen this ; and it has reminded me of the Matron of Jedburgh, and her paralytic husband :—

‘ Her buoyant spirit can prevail,  
Where common cheerfulness would fail :  
She strikes upon him with the heat  
Of July suns ; he feels it sweet !  
An animal delight, though dim ;  
’Tis all that now remains for him ! ’ ”

“ I have now another question to propose :  
do you expect any ladies who are musical ? ”

“ I do.”

“ That is fortunate ; for, having heard you

regret the delay of certain little epistles of business and friendship, it will be an excellent opportunity of writing them. I shall be quite at your service; and, while your friends are performing, the cheerful sounds may perchance invigorate my own movements."

"What do you mean? You surely cannot advise such a slight on my visitors. To turn aside to my own private affairs, when they are striving to gratify myself and friends, would be rude indeed."

"It is surprising, Mistress, that you should object to a silent employment, which would, at least, allow others to listen undisturbed; when you can so freely engage in long and loud conversation, unheeding the sweetest sounds, or the most skilful and elaborate performance."

"On such occasions, I only talk because others do so."

"Certainly; and those others only talk because you do so. Meantime, perhaps, an act of real self-denial recoils on a timid spirit, painfully conscious that its efforts are undervalued."

"But, in this all-accomplished age, we are

burdened with what is merely ornamental. The conversation is often worth more than the music."

"Perhaps so; and when the vain and forward obtrude, with unbidden and unwelcome tones; or the affectation that could not commence, becomes an automaton that cannot leave off; talk them down, by all means, if it so please you. But act not thus when some poor trembling maiden, in obedience to partial friends, and urged by general protestations of the love of music, steps forward hoping to give pleasure, at the expense of her own feelings. If you engage professional singers, your money is the courtesy they require. But, if you tax your friends for harmony, you ought surely to avoid distraction. However, as you will not accept my services on these occasions, allow me to make you another offer."

"What is that?"

"You know that etchings by the pen, when clever and spirited, are much admired. Cannot you employ me in drawing little portraits of yourself, to distribute amongst your friends, whilst they surround you? You will have the

advantage of comparing them with your mirror, and making them quite correct."

"How ridiculous! such a proof of self-conceit would make me quite contemptible."

"How so? are you not continually doing this very thing in conversation? How frequent, how earnest and graphic, are the descriptions of your own views and feelings;—your own doings and sufferings! Could these delineations be transferred, with equal vigour, to paper or canvas, they would rank amongst the triumphs of the pictorial art; and, if practice make perfect, you certainly have great advantages.

' — Those busy subtle pronouns, I and Me,  
Unsought and unexpected they appear.  
No barriers heed they, and no laws revere;  
But wind and penetrate, with dexterous force,  
Through all the cracks and crannies of discourse.' "

"Do you, then, blame, as egotistical, all personal narrative and description? So sweeping an interdict would blot out some of the most interesting pages from books, which have innocently delighted the world; and would chillingly silence many an instructive and delightful conversation."

“ I agree with you ; and believe that the world's store of wisdom would be lessened, were every man's lips sealed up from telling his own story. Experience might then unfold her ancient scrolls in vain ; and many a pure and intense joy remain for ever as a sealed perfume, in the bosom that first cherished it. No ! The secrets of the heart, and the traces of past life, may sometimes be disclosed wisely and gracefully. Yet never, my beloved Mistress, venture on this course, until you have first tried yourself by the touchstone of humility and love. This test alone will mark the point where you cease to be the servant of others, and become the slave of yourself.”

“ Have you any other general rule in this case ? ”

“ I would advise you to beware of favourite topics in conversation. They both nourish and betray the weakness of the heart. From want of caution on this point, one lady becomes the housemaid of the conversation, another the cook, and the third the milliner. Some also become adepts in mimicry ; a talent which they share with fools, monkeys, and little chil-



dren. Of these mimics it may be truly said, that 'a vizard hath been the constant crown of their labours.' And, as in the case of a person, who, for sport or mischief, covers his own features with an unsightly mask, the eye is offended, and the wearer of the vizard shares our disapprobation with the ugly thing itself. Others there are, who shun all these faults; yet have, also, their favourite theme. Let them open their mouths, and their acquaintances instantly expect to hear of aches and pains, of coughs, colds, and nervous disorders."

"Would you then discourage those involuntary expressions of suffering, and appeals to human sympathy, which really seem, in a degree, to alleviate pain?"

"Certainly I would not; first, because they *are* involuntary. Expressions of anguish will at times be wrung from the most enduring fortitude. It is needful, also, sometimes to explain the gloomy aspect and languid manner, which would otherwise perplex an affectionate friend. But it seldom happens that great and real sufferers are forward to annoy others by their croakings."

“ Well, my friend,” I replied, “ you have, with much good advice, pointed out the occasions on which I might with advantage be silent; can you not counsel me how to speak aright?”

“ Gladly would I do so, to the extent of my power,” resumed the Pen; “ but, when I consider the number of excellent observations which you must have heard and read on this subject, I have my fears lest I should fare only as my superiors have fared,—be heard and forgotten. You sometimes quote the remark that ‘ dead counsellors are the safest and most instructive, and are heard with the greatest patience and reverence.’ ”

“ True; but living ones are the most earnest and affectionate, and can best catch the spirit of the time, and touch the finer points and varying shades of character. We feel interested, also, in the counsels of those who work for us, and with us. You have the privilege of an old friend.”

“ Encouraged, then, by this invitation, I will proceed. When I have considered the power of the tongue, the certainty and extent of its

influence in abetting evil and folly, or promoting wisdom and goodness, it has caused me some surprise that you, and many others, should not propose higher and nobler aims in conversation. I know you read, and I believe you think; yet you might have spared yourself the trouble of both, as regards any effect produced on your general conversation. As was said of Bishop Burnett, you do not lay out your knowledge with the same diligence that you lay it in. Miser-like, you rejoice when you have added to your little store of intellectual wealth, though it only be hidden, like buried treasure; and are, meanwhile, less excusable than the miser, for you might share your riches without parting from them."

"Would you, then, advise me to become a professed conversationist,—a sort of female oracle,—a pronouncer of wise sentences and maxims, duly clasped between marks of quotation?"

"No; sorry should I be to see my Mistress resemble ought so unfeminine and ungraceful. Yet would I have her words full of worth and wisdom. Not, indeed, like a set of coins,

shaped and crimped and stamped with your own image ; but poured forth, free and precious and glowing, as molten gold."

" Alas ! therein lies the difficulty. When my words pour forth so freely, then is the very time they seem most worthless."

" Perhaps so ; yet this is only a proof of mental indolence. Diligently exercise your mind in meditations that are good and useful, pure and lovely. Cultivate such truthfulness of expression that your language shall be the clear mirror of the mind ; and then, having thus taken care of your thoughts, your words will take care of themselves."

" Yet it seems to me that conversation, richly endowed with the fruits of thinking and reading, would, however modest and well timed, prove unwelcome to many persons. They would rather tell or hear who is receiving a suitor, and who going a journey,—what lady makes her own dresses, and what other employs a milliner, —who has quarrelled with her maid, and who discharged her footman. These scraps of news, so eagerly sought and circulated, are not confined to near friends, all whose movements are

interesting to those who love them, but are the entertainment of large circles of slight acquaintances."

"And does this sort of conversation give you pleasure?"

"Certainly not; yet I would cultivate an affectionate interest in the simplest cares and employments of my friends, whenever I could gratify them by sympathy or assistance. But, when I have turned from the discourses of the wise and the good, or from gazing on the fair open face of nature, or from studying the achievements of art, and have been assailed with this minute gossip, it has given me a sort of mental shock, as if suddenly removed from the subdued light and sombre grandeur of an old baronial residence, to the glitter and glare of a toy-shop, full of dolls and drums, of miniature windmills and penny trumpets. I have, on such occasions, envied the far superior gossip of the German song:—

' We sat by the fisher's cottage,  
We looked on sea and sky;  
We saw the mists of evening  
Come riding and rolling by:

The lights in the lighthouse window  
Brighter and brighter grew,  
And on the dim horizon  
A ship still hung in view.

' We spake of storm and shipwreck,  
Of the seaman's anxious life ;  
How he floats 'twixt sky and water,  
'Twixt joy and sorrow's strife ;  
We spake of coasts far distant ;  
We spake of south and north ;  
Strange men, and stranger customs,  
That those wild lands sent forth :

' Of the giant trees of Ganges,  
Whose balm perfumes the breeze ;  
And the fair and slender creatures  
That kneel by the lotus trees :  
Of the flat-skull'd, wide-mouth'd Laplanders,  
So dirty and so small ;  
Who bake their fish on the embers,  
And cower and shake and squall.

' The maidens listen'd earnestly,  
At last the tales were ended ;  
The ship was gone, the dusky night  
Had on our talk descended.'

" Here is scope for the fancy ; and a sense of  
freshness and diffusiveness. But O the nar-

rowness of petty personal detail! It seems to suffocate me as the smell of burnt weeds. I close my lips and shrink within myself."

"A vast improvement on the case, truly! Are you not aware how much your complainings condemn yourself? You perceive the tendency of female converse to sink to what is confined, feeble, and frivolous; to dwell on the shadows of the absent; on the stale and lifeless *past*: why not then awake and seize the present moment, with its fair flowers springing under your feet, and its fresh gales breathing around you? Why not catch and reflect the sparkling sunlight of every useful truth, as it newly presents itself to view?"

"Stay awhile; did I understand you as condemning the recollections of the past?"

"Yes; not indeed the past history of the world, or the treasured lore of the honoured dead, but stories of by-gone days of merely personal interest and feeling. Concerning these, I would say, beware of the past. There, vanity and self-gratulation have hoarded their records. There, resentment keeps her long score of unremitted debts. There, vain regrets brood in

darkness. The female heart is peculiarly liable to this fault. Men, in the stirring duties of busy life, forget the trifles which seem engraven on the tender minds of women. I have often blamed, yet pitied, the excited feeling, the vain repetitions, with which in familiar *chit-chat* the tedious, thrice-told tales have been bandied from one to another. And I have observed in small circles of speakers, where the heart freely unfolds itself, this essence of foolishness becomes the more concentrated. Secrets are too often revealed, to the subsequent regret and confusion of the unwary speaker. Yet she quiets her conscience by charging the hearer not to repeat the matter. This is very good; but, perhaps, the absent person most concerned would feel as much mortified at this first communication as she could possibly feel at any secondary betrayal of the secret. And it seems unreasonable to expect that mere acquaintances should evince more delicacy for the feelings and character of the injured party than is shown by the friend in whom she confides.

“To avoid these evils, let me advise you, dear Mistress, to regard useful knowledge, not



merely as the subject of books, and as diffused by societies instituted for the purpose, but as one of the principal ends of conversation. All social intercourse is the commerce of intellect and feeling, continually carried on, whether it be regarded or not. A wise merchant of small, but precious, pearls, who buys up the present moment, will be continually learning, or teaching; and both with equal advantage to himself."

"You would lay it down, then, as a general rule, that in every conversation something useful should be acquired, and communicated, by every one present?"

"Most assuredly I would. And here let me gently remind you, how vain are the regrets which sadden the heart, when suddenly deprived of a wise and virtuous friend, eminent perhaps in some high and excellent attainment, concerning which you might, from him, have gained continual accessions of new information. His words, on that particular subject at least, were as sands of gold. But, having no high and specific aim, you wandered to subjects more on a level with your own acquirements. Your

indulgent friend left you to your choice; and now that those lips are closed in silence, you lament in vain over lost opportunities of improvement."

"Are you not now supposing a very peculiar case, affording extraordinary advantages of conversation?"

"The case I have suggested is peculiar only in the eminence of the individual; but it is not extraordinary in its general character. Almost every person can convey instruction on some one subject. I refer not now to the technicalities of art or profession, though in regard to them, much may be gained. But I allude to the powers and individual attainments of the mind. Every person has some talent, some attainment, which is, to himself, both art and science; and for which he has a turn, or tact, which is his peculiar treasure. Of his investigations, his progress, his failures, and successes, he will speak as none other can speak. The diligent enquirer may elicit from him apt and useful lessons, which might otherwise perish with him,—a buried treasure of which there is no memorial. Whatever affects the economy of

human life is valuable. If regret be felt for the loss of the art by which the ancients mixed a cement, or secured the vividness of a colour, how carefully should we preserve all that has a bearing on the virtue and happiness of man."

"All this," I remarked, "appears clear and practicable: and, especially, when we remember the almost infinite diversity of manner and degree, in which the wise and good attain to wisdom and goodness. I can readily understand how the many should instruct me, but am not so clear as to the probability of myself ministering to the improvement of others."

"Be content with small beginnings. Try if you cannot, at the least, awaken curiosity and excite emulation. If you succeed so far only, your efforts will not be thrown away. Beautiful, indeed, is that mild and simple influence which resembles 'the gentle and kindly dawn of morning, doing little more than lift up the veil from nature, and spread out the world before us, that looking on it we may love it.' As certainly as every human voice has its own peculiar tones, so has every human spirit its own distinctive power of giving emphasis to the

echoes of truth. You are not confined to the narrow stores within your own breast. Look above and around you. Where did the moralist and the poet learn their noblest lessons? Whence did they dig the gems, and gather the flowers, by which they have enriched and charmed the world? They brought them from depths and from gardens which are open to you. They looked on nature with a loving heart and an attentive eye; and they told what they saw and felt. Studying art with an instructed and admiring mind, they were continually engaged in treasuring up just ideas, or communicating them to others. They set themselves in the full light of truth,—absorbing, and then reflecting, the rays on every surrounding object. You have an advantage, also, which I would not omit to notice;—the rareness with which you allow yourself to read works of fiction. This tends to keep your imagination vivid and vigorous.”

“Do you consider, then, that the frequent perusal of writings of that class is unfavourable to brilliancy of imagination? Methinks the ladies would all differ from you there.”

“ My remark is, nevertheless, correct. The habitual reader of fictitious story may acquire a ready power of producing and multiplying images of the haunted castle, the noble baron, and the graceful lady of the old romance. She may pass, in airy phantom, before the mental eye, the lighter and gayer forms that flit through the drawing-room of the modern novel. But such an one is not very likely to become apt in discerning, or skilful in depicting, those countless minute varieties in character and event, which diversify the surface of daily life, and constitute the genuine features of living truth. Even the great master of imaginative story learned the most potent secrets of his magic art while conning the legends of his native Highlands ; and would not trust himself to trace the lighter sketches of landscape scenery, until he had minutely examined all around him,—even to the simplest florets of the bold and lonely crag. The charmed cup of fiction must ever be replenished from the fountain of truth.”

“ Is there not danger, while thus attempting to improve others, of aiming at unattainable

perfection, and sliding into a dictatorial spirit ? Should we not, thereby, risk the probability of offending a high spirit, and paining a susceptible one ? ”

“ There is danger : and it will often require great prudence, and some ingenuity, to introduce lessons of instruction, even to those much younger and more inexperienced than yourself. Yet be not discouraged. It is a good work to assist in preventing the young from ‘growing wise at their own expense, and being taught only by their own errors and misfortunes.’ Those who thus communicate the fruits of their experience, perform a service as valuable and welcome, as that of the celebrated Arctic voyager, who left behind him on the inhospitable shore, where his vessel was wrecked, the well-stowed provisions he had saved from destruction, and which were as life from the dead to the succeeding navigator and his suffering crew.”

“ Your remark on this important point is, no doubt, very good ; but it is too general. Have you no rules ? ”

“ To good taste and good sense the rules

would spring naturally out of the subject, and the occasion ; and it were better that every one should form his own rules from observation and experience. Take care, however, that in communicating knowledge, as in conferring favours, you do it with generous delicacy. All will be spoiled if you humiliate whom you would assist, and put to the blush those you seek to inform. Cultivate a wise-hearted benevolence, aiming singly to promote the improvement and happiness of others ; and the keen instincts of the human heart will soon perceive your real design. Carefully avoid all self-gratulation on your own advantages, real or imaginary. If you converse in solitude with the apparition of your own superiority, it will make its appearance unbidden and to your discomfiture in society. Preserve, especially, a spirit of profound modesty. If frugality be the fund of liberality, modesty is as truly the shield and the crown of enterprize. It gives depth and force to character, like the strong relief of a fine sculpture ; and heightens the brilliancy of excellence, as shadows raise the tints of a painting. Endeavour, in all

things, to spread sunshine on the prospect and path of your fellow-creatures. Never remind another of sorrows of which he does not complain, and which, but for your ill-timed condolence, he might for awhile forget. Never, under the semblance of gratitude for your own lot, force your hearer into painful contrast with yourself; rather hide your own joys, than reveal them only to excite envy. Above all, take care that no cultivation or refinement of taste become a pretext for resembling Floretta, in the fable; who, having tasted the pungent liquid in the golden cup, could afterwards see faults only. Some appear to have quaffed deeply of this cup. They gain a perverted skilfulness in causing their friends to feel their own deficiencies and disadvantages; not merely to check vanity and ostentation, but often as the ungracious return for communications of warm-hearted simplicity and good-nature."

"Yes; but surely that is mere wanton aggravation. None would expect by such means to instruct others."

"Yet such, my Mistress, may be the pretext.



I have sometimes thought that the arts of aggravation might be reduced to a system; so that harmless people should understand the construction and use of the weapons that wound them, and the movements and tactics by which they are so dexterously applied. The catalogue of these treacherous small arms would be a striking exhibition of the multiplied powers of annoyance, and suggest notice and warning of vulnerable points."

"Your catalogue should also include the defensive armour; otherwise, I fear, there are spirits so perverted as to avail themselves of the aggressive weapons, while the simple-hearted would profit little by the warning."

"Very likely so. However, let me remark that wherever penetration is used only to detect weaknesses, and power stoops to inflict needless pain, it is a strong symptom of secret envy in the heart of the aggressor;—of conscious debasement in some point of contrast with his victim. But, to return to the rules: If you cannot raise bright and happy thoughts in the mind of another, take care that you do not depress any that have arisen there. How

many a noble aspiration and glowing sentiment have been checked by a chilling worldly-wise answer. The aggrieved thinks within herself, 'Never again will I give utterance to that thought.' And this, though an evil, is often the least part of the mischief. The probability is, that she will never think that thought again. The tie between it and other kindred thoughts is rudely dissevered. I would plead for the simple and generous affections of the young heart, as the poet petitioned for his flower:—

'O spare my flower, my gentle flower,  
The slender creature of a day!  
Let it bloom out its little hour,  
And pass away.

'Too soon its fleeting charms must lie  
Decay'd, unnoticed, overthrown:  
O, hasten not its destiny,—  
Too like thine own!

'The breeze will roam this way to-morrow,  
And sigh to find his play-mate gone:  
The Bee will come its sweets to borrow,  
And meet with none.'

“Let it be your delightful task to draw forth the merits of others into exercise and notice. This alone will be a powerful safeguard against most of the evils of which I would warn you. Your own heart will be refreshed when you succeed in awakening another to a new and useful view of his own brighter side, and adding to him a new enjoyment of his own powers. By very simple and unostentatious means, this may most wisely and beneficially be effected, in behalf of those whose advantages are few, and who diligently use all they possess. A benevolent heart will joy over such cases, as at sight of the garden of a poor man, who knows and cultivates its every inch of ground,

‘And every single plant and flower,  
That grows within its bound.’”

“Your rules,” I observed, “are good. Nevertheless, I fear that in attending to so many of them, a perpetual self-consciousness would haunt me, both when I speak and when I am silent. Methinks I should watch my

words like a little child, who looks down at its feet, until it tumbles head foremost; or that, when silent, I should resemble Miss Mitford's Periwinkle,—‘a lonely flower, looking at itself in the ice.’”

“Yet,” resumed the Pen, “if you recall to mind the aim and purport of my remarks, they all tend the opposite way. They are designed to turn your attention from self, and to fix it on outward and on higher objects. The more steadily the eye is fixed on what is true, and good, and beautiful, the less of painful consciousness will attend the effort to approach it. I grant, that if you have been habitually careless in conversation, you may at first feel a sense of restraint, while vigilantly guarding against old faults. But go on patiently awhile, and the minuter precepts of wisdom and virtue will not long be conned with pain and difficulty, as letters by a child learning to spell. The law of love will soon be read by your practised eye with ease and fluency. You will rapidly and instinctively catch the meaning of its glowing characters, in all their order, and harmony, and emphasis. At any rate, dearest Mistress, it is

worth the trial, especially if there be truth in the sayings of one book,—one old and venerable book, which I have hardly ventured to name to you. I have gathered from your own remarks, that this book teaches that the world, with all its bright and busy pageantry, is but the vestibule and antechamber of another; that this life is but the prelude of a new state of existence, of thrilling interest and tremendous consequence to every human spirit; and that the transition is mysteriously connected with one great day of retribution which shall come,—shall surely come,—though no astronomer can calculate, no seer predict the hour of its dawning. In that day of remembrance the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and the effects of all lives be revealed, with terrible clearness, in the light of memory and conscience. Amongst the several tests that shall decide the character and destiny of every soul, the Judge himself hath declared, ‘By thy words thou shalt be judged, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.’”

Methought that as these words proceeded from the pen, a solemn thrill pervaded my whole frame. The soft tones which had flowed

so smoothly were changed for the clear sweet voice of my gentle Aunt Mary. "Sybilla," she asked, earnestly, "Sybilla, have you been asleep?"—"I can scarcely tell," said I; "for this pen and I have been holding a long conversation, and he has given me much good advice: however he appears perfectly quiet now."

I proceeded to give a rapid summary of the imaginary dialogue, to which my kind relative listened with deep attention. "So," said she, "honest quill," looking at the pen with a smile, "you have furnished subjects to the day-dreams of the young mind. Come with me, and try if you cannot also assist in giving expression to the plain waking thoughts of riper years." Thus saying, she lightly balanced the unresisting pen on her thin fair finger, and walked away with it. "No! no!" said I, "not my old favourite; take another." But she moved on unheeding; and the rustling sound of her old-fashioned silk dress was succeeded by a loud knocking at the door, which announced the arrival of visitors.

During several days Sybilla found no leisure to resume her sedentary employments, in the sunny little parlour. Her mind, however, was frequently occupied, in the interval, with musings on the subject of her late dialogue with the Pen; and in reviewing her failures or successes, in the endeavour to profit by the hints so singularly suggested. With one truth she was peculiarly impressed; viz., the great power of habit over words, as well as actions. She perceived that words wear for themselves a sort of channel, in which similar words will have a tendency to flow, as naturally as streams in their ancient courses. She also discovered, that we unconsciously slide into the habit of appropriating a certain style of conversation to particular persons; and that, at the sight of every such person, the old class of remarks drop from our lips, even when the will had resolved otherwise. Sybilla called to mind much in her own experience, which led to the conviction, that it would greatly increase the freshness, courtesy, and power of social intercourse, did we maintain, in converse with old acquaintance, more of self-government, prudence,

and politeness,—“such as we practised at first sight.” The closer intimacies become, the greater is the danger of their sinking below the level of all that is safe, honourable, and beneficial. These views Sybilla regarded as monitory, rather than discouraging. She employed them as incentives to rise, and break the force of every faulty habit in conversation, and not as excuses for indolence.

On returning to her favourite retirement, Sybilla found her pen restored, with nicest care, to the very spot from whence it had been removed; and near it lay a neatly folded letter. She looked from one to the other, and smiled as she thought of her Aunt's words.



AUNT MARY'S LETTER.

---

MY DEAR SYBILLA,

AUTUMN is to me peculiarly the season for thought; whether of reflection on the past, or of musing on the distant and the future. In winter, the heart seems bound up in an intensity of home-fixedness. Mind and body are confined to a narrow circle.

“ O winter, weary winter,  
How narrow seems the earth !  
Thou coop'st us in the valleys,  
By the little cottage hearth.”

The stillness and silence are, indeed, but the repose of nature in her chrysalis state; but, while it lasts, the human heart seems to partake of the torpor. Earth, however, soon awakes to life and beauty; and spring is seen nursing the infant flowers. Yet this is no season for meditation. The mind is busied in perceptions vivid

as the opening pleasures of childhood, and the heart has room only for delight.

Spring! joyous maiden! how blithely she beckoned us over hill and dale. How busily we gathered the cowslips and primroses she dropped in the sunny places. But while she lured us through the woods, embossed with swelling buds, and over the stream lately frost-bound, but now sparkling with rippled waves beneath her footsteps, she was slyly intending to leave us. We followed her, every sense awakening to new delight, until reaching the brow of the hill we gazed around, and she was gone!

We looked over the sky: it was a clear expanse of deep blue: she was not there; nor did there remain a fragment of those silver clouds which she wrapped around her, when she came to drive away the storms of winter. We retraced our steps; she was not in the woods. The tender green leaflets which came with her, and remained while they could see violets near the roots of the tree, were no more. Her favourite flowers had disappeared, and were succeeded by a new race of stately forms and glowing beauty.

Summer had come, we scarcely knew how ;  
had filled the air with her balmy odorous  
breath, and bathed the meadows in a flood of  
light. The roses were unfolded, and the grapes  
began to ripen. Life, warm joyous life, had  
mysteriously slipped in, and filled every nook  
and cranny.

“ O summer, gentle summer,  
How spreads the world around !  
The higher we climb the mountain,  
The wider grows its bound.”

How skilfully the Invisible Hand guides all  
this wondrous machinery ! How delicately  
He effects the transposition, so perfect, yet so  
gradual. Every year it is renewed ; yet every  
year steals on us with the same pleasing sur-  
prise. But when sober autumn comes, when  
our chase after enjoyment has subsided, then  
the gradations, though still soft, are more  
perceptible. We mark the fruits of the field  
and of the garden passing to replenish the barn  
and the storehouse. We gather our roses, and  
they wither. The scorching sunbeams, from  
which we took shelter in woods and groves, are

now become fainter. Cool breezes woo us to the thymy meadows, and we bathe in the lighter dews of the fresh hill-tops. Yet we perceive that the glory which covers the forest, as with molten gold, is a parting splendour, the first symptom of decay. And the gorgeous clouds which adorn the evening sky appear to have come from some happier clime, to throw a solemn splendour around the closing day.

Spring and summer make haste to adorn the earth, and push forward all the energies of nature. But there is a pause, a stillness in autumn, which lingers in decline. We have now time to look around us. The pleasures of sensation begin to subside. Now is the time to reflect. We gather in our store, and compare the seed-time, and the cultivation of the year, with the harvest.

I have made this lengthened allusion to the changing seasons of the year, because they teach a lesson marked with peculiar emphasis. It was not without design that Infinite Wisdom has so ordered them as to present to us an ever-present type of the varying seasons and changeful periods of human life, and compelled

us annually to pass through the brief epitome of this mortal state,—a state less certain and more variable than the seasons of the year. The instruction thus afforded is so striking that it cannot easily be overlooked; and so important that poets, philosophers, and divines, the wisest and the best of men, have been eager to press it on our serious regard. We shall need all the treasures of the year to sustain us through the winter of life, and the best of our store must still be reserved as a provision for that state which shall follow the harvest of the world.

The mellow autumnal sun-light, which shines in softly through the lattice, has many years thus visited me, like an old acquaintance. It reminds me that my Spring is long since past,—my Summer is ended. It remains to me only, with humble gratitude, “to wave the sheaf before the Lord;”—to gather in the fruits of Autumn, and finish the duties of life, before the rigours of Winter assail me. But this declining sun-light carries inspiration in its beams, and reminds me of the glowing sentiments of the poet :—

“Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!  
But long as God-like wish, or hope divine,  
Informs my spirit, ne’er can I believe  
That this magnificence is wholly thine!

“From worlds not quickened by the sun  
A portion of the gift is won;  
An intermingling of Heaven’s pomp is spread  
On ground which British shepherds tread!

“And if there be whom broken ties  
Afflict, or injuries assail,  
Yon hazy ridges to their eyes  
Present a glorious scale,  
Climbing, suffused with sunny air,  
To stop—no record hath told where!  
And tempting fancy to ascend,  
And with immortal spirits blend!  
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look around,  
And see to what fair countries ye are bound!”

The account of your imaginary dialogue with the Pen interested me much. His suggestions may be regarded, not only as correct advices, but as central points, around which your own thoughts may revolve in widening circles, embracing larger and still larger foldings of truth. They have tended greatly to quicken my sense

of the deep responsibility attached to the powers of the tongue. His philosophy is all prudential and practical; yet his appeals to reason, taste, and feeling, derive full sanction from the sacred oracles of divine truth. Practice must be founded on principle; and the only sure and effectual principles, on all moral subjects, must be drawn from the Word of God,—the only sure word of testimony. Hence, all merely moral and prudential maxims sink in comparison with the superior teachings of heavenly wisdom. They are lost, and disappear in presence of the greater light, whose glory excelleth, as Jotham's allegory of the trees of the wood fades in comparison with the more exquisite parables of Him who spake as never man spake. Be it my privilege, my dear Sybilla, to employ the same Pen, with whose freedom you are now familiar, in pointing you more directly to these fountains of eternal truth. Let the divinely inspired word "dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." "Bow down thine ear and hear the words of the wise; for it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee: they shall withal be fitted in thy lips."—So

spake the royal moralist, who asked wisdom of God, and it was given him. By this wisdom he taught that life and death, good and evil, honour and shame, are found in the fruit of the lips.

Speech is the distinguishing property of man. Its power is every where marked in Scripture as incalculably great : " The tongue of the just is as choice silver. The tongue of the wise is health, and a tree of life. A word fitly spoken is as apples of gold in pictures of silver." On the other hand, " the tongue of the wicked is a sharp sword, an arrow shot out, a devouring fire. The tongue can no man tame. It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature. It is full of deadly poison." This indomitable character of the tongue renders it peculiarly the distinctive property of the individual. Time and money may be in the power of guardians, and rigid discipline may restrain their use: but, on the tongue, restraint can only be partial and temporary. It finds continual opportunity to assert its freedom ; and is generally most loud and violent in denouncing and defying all attempts to repress its licence.





startle and undeceive the most simple and credulous. The practised world do not rely on their own professions : and even the most amiable of the fallen children of Adam continually betray their defection from the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart—and thy neighbour as thyself." On this subject our most blessed Lord and Saviour fully attested the truth in his discourse with one of the most amiable and virtuous of the Jewish rulers. To the mild, the candid Nicodemus, he said with great emphasis, "Ye must be born again !" The reason assigned for this paramount necessity precludes all exceptions in favour of the most lovely specimens of human nature : "for that which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit :"—"except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

On this ground, I would impress on my dear young friend, that the regeneration of the heart is essential to self-government ; and, therefore, to the government of the tongue. We do but deceive and are deceived, until we realize the

prayer of the Psalmist,—“ Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me.” “ Every tree is known by its own fruit. Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes.”

Deep seriousness and spirituality of mind is of primary importance, as the source of just and noble views, in the outset of life. It is equally essential to happiness and to excellence. It yields the most exquisite enjoyment to the heart, and confers the highest beauty on character. If it be thought a paradox to inculcate that the highest happiness of the young, to whom the world is still smiling and full of untasted pleasures, consists in abandoning all that strikes the imagination, and fascinates the heart, for what is distant, future, and wholly spiritual, let me remind you that nothing is required to be sacrificed which is not evil in its nature or tendencies. The question is rather, How shall we best enjoy all that is good and lawful? To scent the most attractive odours, we must wait until the flowers open ; to taste the true flavour of the most delicious fruits, we must have them

fully ripe; to fall upon the boasted pleasures of the world before they are mellowed and enriched by the genial influences of a brighter sky, and the hallowing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, is to imitate the folly of children, whose teeth are set on edge by eating sour grapes. The fairest flowers of earth are never seen in their most beautiful aspects, until viewed in the light reflected from "things not seen as yet." O, who shall reveal to the young heart that great secret, "the powers of the world to come," in brightening and beautifying the present life!—when wisdom dwells with prudence, and the gate of the heavenly kingdom becomes the true introduction to all the blessings of the present state! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Has it never struck my dear Sybilla, that the most perfect impressions of sublime grandeur, and the most finished traces of delicate and graceful beauty, are ever found where the visible works of the Creator remain untouched by the contrivances of man? Is it possible to conceive that the will of the divine

Architect should work beauty, and grandeur, and goodness in this material world, which is but the footstool of his throne; and that his chosen abode, the throne of his glory, should shed on us such influences only as are gloomy, and irksome, and ungracious? Could he build the magnificent temple of the universe, to fill it only with smoke? Can he have left it destitute of the Shekinah, and of the Urim and Thummim, by which the worshippers may be brought into converse with himself, and taught to enjoy life, as he designed it to be enjoyed? Never could this error have betrayed the unwary into the fear of being "righteous overmuch," had not the god of this world dimmed the human vision, in order to conceal the infinite and everlasting superiority of aught that is "of the Father," over all that is "of the world."

This state of mind, so necessary to give expanse and elevation to your own views, has less to do with furnishing the subjects of conversation, than with teaching how to deal with such as are started. I am far from thinking that any one should be incessantly talking

about religion. Still less do I deem it proper or becoming in a woman to manifest her zeal for doctrines, opinions, and controverted questions, agitated in what is called the Christian world. The effective power of piety in a lady, is, in social life, seldom found to consist in direct teaching, exhortation, or reproofs; but in her spirit,—in the influence of goodness, truth, and purity, which she throws around her. If any thing positively evil arise, it is instantly discountenanced in her presence. What may appear doubtful or indifferent receives a happy turn and a right direction; and all that is good and useful secures the welcome of her smiles,—her warm and ready support.

The mind thus elevated discerns, as from an eminence, the relative proportions and true perspective of time and eternity; and will be careful not to allow company and conversation to absorb more of the former, than can be beneficially allotted to their enjoyment. One great cause of the poverty and insipid character of ordinary conversation arises from our being more in company than in private. He—

“Who lives to others too much known,  
A stranger to himself alone,”—

may amuse for an hour, but can never become an instructive or valuable companion. Reading, meditation, and study are essential to excellence of discourse; and he that converses most with his own heart, in patient self-examination, will best understand how to interest and instruct the hearts of others.

Retirement, however, may be so spent as to sacrifice all the advantages of society, without securing the legitimate gain of solitude. There are few friends more influential than those silent ones, with whom we converse in secret; and whose spirit we are generally found to carry with us into company. What precious hours are wasted on the exciting novel, and the still more exciting drama! And how frequently do we find the unprofitable fruit of such reading stealing out in conversation. When the fair reader closes the volume, her whole frame agitated with intense interest in the tragic or triumphant story, she longs for some listening friend to whom she may communicate her own delight, and recommend the thrilling

tale. But alas! her friend is not a novel-reader, and cares for none of the wonders of unreal life. She is a politician; and would rather talk of cabinet-councils and continental news. Whilst the former reader fills her imagination with the dream-like chivalry of the high and noble names of imaginative story; the latter is tasking her memory with lists of personages who composed the dinner-parties, or crowded the balls and concerts, of the living nobility, bearing the same or similar titles. Should these ladies be joined by a third, whose study and favourite topic is dress, then novel and newspaper must both give place; for there is a charm in the last new fashion which few female hearts can resist. And then, what useless talk! How foreign to the real interests and duties of the speakers; and often to their sex and station! Yet the wasted energies thus employed are often the lamentable foils of amiable dispositions and fine natural talents. O, were these immortal minds imbued with the beauty and spirit of religion; with the treasures of true knowledge and wisdom; and with the noble inspirations of the hal-



lowed muse, interchanged occasionally with the precious, though simpler theories of domestic duty, then instead of the lips "pouring forth foolishness," they would be full of "pleasant words, like the (laden) honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." "The words of the mouth" would be "as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as the flowing brook!"

There is an expressive aptness in the scripture aphorism, "Foolish talking and jesting are not convenient." The visits of these intruders are generally mischievous and ill-timed,—either abetting the faults, or paining the infirmities of human nature. The subjects which peculiarly move the frivolity of the light-minded are, almost invariably, those which seriously and lastingly affect human happiness. How frequently does the conversation of young persons nourish in each other unwise thoughts and unsafe purposes on the subjects of love and marriage. Seasonably or unseasonably, these all-interesting themes slide in, and sometimes occupy the long summer's day or winter's eve in their discussion. Yet amidst the many words

concerning life's most solemn relationship, how few tend to teach the young listener to seek that in *her* case marriage may receive the only true pledges of prosperity; the approval of the wise and upright in heart, the guidings of Providence, and the blessing of God!

If, instead of seeking and following enlightened guides, the steps of the young pilgrim are lured on by the wild and irregular notes of the mocking-bird, who can wonder if her path shall end in disappointment and sorrow? Wilful folly, rather than stern necessity, should bear the blame of most of those "crossings in love," which are the theme of so many songs and sayings. Thus sings the poet:

" Whenever under bowers of myrtle  
Love, summer-tress'd and vernal-eyed,  
At morn or eve is seen to wander,  
A dark-eyed girl is at his side.

" No eye beholds the virgin gliding  
Unsandall'd through the thicket's glooms;  
Yet some have mark'd her shadow moving  
Like twilight o'er the whiter blooms.

“ A golden bow the Brother carries,  
A silver flute the Sister bears :  
And ever at the fatal moment  
The notes and arrows fly in pairs.

“ She rests her flute upon her bosom,  
(While up to heaven his bow he rears,)  
And as her kisses make it tremble,  
That flute is moisten'd by her tears.

“ The lovely twain were born together,  
And in the same shell-cradle laid ;  
And in the bosom of one mother  
Together slept, and sleeping played.

“ Accept them both, or hope for neither,  
O loveliest youth, or maid love-lorn !  
For Grief has come when love is welcome,  
And Love will comfort those who mourn.”

Do these strains so sweet, so mournfully sweet, tell all that can be told of the brief tale of mortal affections ? In a subordinate sense they may. But there are tablets more enduring than the fairest pages of poesy. There are the records of Scripture and experience on which are graven, in everlasting lines, “ Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

Many a happy matron can set her seal to the truth of this saying. Taught by the wisdom that cometh from above, which is pure as it is peaceable, she with true delicacy of heart shunned every wish and aim which sought to run before the will and providence of her heavenly Father. Her heart, unvexed in youth by vain and anxious cares, now reposes in the purest conjugal affection, surrounded by blessing and honour, which the vain-minded never can enjoy.

Be careful, my dearest Sybilla, that no idle words of yours encourage idle thoughts in the minds of others. Endeavour, on these subjects, to raise the tone of conversation amongst your young friends; not by grave lectures, but by the gentle influence of refinement of mind and seriousness of heart. If you cannot succeed in this attempt, you may at least lessen that "multitude of words, in which there wanteth not sin."

Keep your mouth as with a bridle, whenever you come in contact with those contrivers of mischief called "match-makers;" and especially never join the vulgar levities with which elderly

unmarried ladies are assailed. A feather shows the way of the wind. It is more than probable that the jeers and gibes flung at "old maids" cause much of the fretfulness of many hearts, in the unmarried state, and of the rashness with which they sometimes escape from it. When "the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit," there is no character more estimable in the church, and none to whom families are more indebted.

Employments are the artificers of character, and amusements reveal the dispositions of the heart. "The pursuits of the world, where, as on a child's rocking-horse, we move to and fro, yet make no progress," cramp the energies and wither all the finer powers of the mind. In every engagement the mind must have an object and aim sufficient to interest the heart, and exercise the understanding, or it will recoil on itself in restless dissatisfaction, and with morbid affections. The opinions of the young have, on these subjects, much influence on their associates; and words become the wings of action. How readily does the youthful voice

herald any novel or fashionable method of trifling away time ! and how eager is the pursuit ! Yet the frivolous employments which fashion so busily invents have a constant tendency to excite, without satisfying, the desire of the eye, and to inflame, without real gratification, the pride of life. In their most innocent forms how bare and lifeless they appear when contrasted with the humblest aims, bearing the stamp of immortality ! This is the true cause that they are so speedily cast aside, and fresh novelties demanded. In conversation, therefore, as well as by example, promote amongst your friends such employments and amusements only as have a bearing, direct or indirect, on the improvement of the mind and heart. All others must fade in the comparison, as the painted sky and trees of a scenic representation before the glowing æther, and the living waving foliage of the woods.

Yet what heart has not been shaken by the world's watchwords, or what imagination is not dazzled by glimpses of the splendid adornments of her tents ? Let us not add our smiles to those of the great deceiver, nor by word or

deed countenance her deceptions. If we would safely test the character of the world, let us stipulate that her price be deducted from the product of her promises. Like other soothsayers, she will,

“ — For poor sixpence promise countless wealth :  
Let her, if she expect to be believed,  
Deduct the sixpence, and bestow the rest.”

Rather let those who have tried the world give us the results of their experience. Let them say, if she can give rest to the weary and heavy-laden ;—if her yoke be easy and her burden light ? If all experience teaches the contrary, let us turn to the dictates of heavenly wisdom, which assure us that “ to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.”

Modesty and lowliness of heart are the best tutors of decorum of speech and manners. Their effects are at once perceived, and give universal pleasure ; and they are valuable hostages for the forthcoming of other good qualities ; for these graces never exist alone. They are rather the soil in which every virtue

flourishes. Hence the loftiest aspirations of the mind should be based in profound humility. On this subject the advice of the good George Herbert loses none of its strength or value, by the quaint and antique dress in which it is presented :—

“ Pitch thy behaviour low, thy projects high ;  
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be :  
Sink not in spirit. Who aimeth at the skie  
Shoots higher much than he that means a tree.  
A grain of glory mixt with humbleness  
Cures both a fever and lethargickness.”

He who willeth the true elevation of man, not less than his real happiness, taught the great secret, in terms which must ever remain a paradox to human pride. “ He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” God and man unite in fulfilling this decree. The Creator, from the justice of his holiness : our fellow-creatures, sometimes unconsciously, but often from a spirit of retaliation. The effects of this divine and human agency operate so unceasingly, and so surely, that the rule knows no exception. Whoever, therefore, aims at true eminence



should in all things seek to be clothed with humility.

Humility is an inward and spiritual grace. Its great beauty is the ease derived from unconsciousness. Whatever would assume its semblance, in sordid submission or servile manners, is either not genuine or very superficial. When Addison portrayed Vanity, he remarked, "every portion of her dress was in a flutter, and endeavoured to distinguish itself from the rest." This was a happy figure; and may serve equally to depict those painful semblances of humility, which are but the disguises of remaining pride.

The most striking feature of humility is simplicity; a characteristic which may be found strangely defective in our first attempts to attain true humility; but which will be certainly acquired as we advance to perfection. When you speak, let your language be the simple expression of the heart; and the heart itself will lay aside much of its guile, when the tongue is no longer suffered to aid its deceptions. Seek not to appear wiser or better than you really are. Under the best disguises, nothing is

gained by the monotony and stiffness of assumed excellence ; and detection is certain to follow, with humiliation and contempt in its train. On the other hand, the very inequalities of a simple and natural behaviour, never fail to interest and to please. The distinction between genuine and affected humility is wide, and the severance is certain, as between life and death. The artificial flower droops not for want of air and water ; but neither can it revive with the sweet nourishment of the elements, and send forth joy and fragrance,—for the life is wanting.

To the menial office of setting words as baits to catch a little human praise, the humble mind can never stoop. But take care also that vanity do not steal in, and by holding her mirror in an inverted position, cheat you into the affectation of humility in talking of your own defects and failings. Submit yourself with confidence to the judgment of others, in the fear of God ; and be assured that your reward will, in the end, be ample, in the just appreciation of your real merits. If you use your neighbour only as a pedestal, on which to exalt yourself, however polished and stately your

character may be, you will in the end be made to appear as a mutilated statue; and your head will be deprived of the noble coronal, which is the grateful return of the honour you have freely conferred upon others.

When high and heavenly objects interest a heart deeply grounded in humility, the mind is kept in that state of uprightness and equilibrium, which is most favourable to truthfulness of perception and expression. The spirit then rises superior to all narrow views, petty contrivances, and disguises; and spurns all subterfuges, as inapplicable to the subjects with which it converses, and wholly incompatible with the happiness it seeks. We seldom attempt to deceive ourselves or others, except when pride desires a veil, or selfishness demands an instrument to effect some purpose. Then, indeed, we shrink from the near approach of truth, because the brightness of her countenance renders our frailties too palpable and painful to ourselves; and we extinguish the light that is in us, lest it should reveal those frailties to our neighbours. When thus entangled in the nets that are spread over all low

pursuits and earth-born cares, we cannot see afar off; and mistake cunning for wisdom, and artifice for prudence. The consequences are as fatal to our peace, as they are destructive of virtue. He who seeks by these means to escape evil or secure good, commits as great an error as the traveller who, to secure life and property from the highwayman, should travel by twilight instead of the open day. But, where truth and meekness possess the heart, it is sheltered in its own lowliness; its internal workings are the operations "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" and every new developement, like those of the chrysalis, is an earnest of, and a preparation for, a happier and more glorious state.

In this age of searching intellect, there is, perhaps, little danger that the vulgar pride of property, or of connexion, should tinge the conversation of educated women. But, the pride of ability! the pride of character! the pride of alms-deeds and alms-gifts! O, what need, in these busy days of the church, have a woman's heart and lips to guard against these unsuspected snares! What need to remember the modest,

silent love of one who, while she poured forth precious ointment in honour of her Lord, "stood at his feet behind him." Ambitious aims, and self-exalting projects, may for a time succeed, and cling to apparent support. But soon it is discovered that the props of earth are broken reeds; and the down-stricken hopes, like the petals of fallen flowers, are trailed in the dust. Meanwhile, the heart which hath not exercised itself in matters too high for it, rests happy and secure on the immovable basis of truth and nature; like the dew-nourished violet, it is lowly, but not debased.

Humility! beautiful and blessed! Defective as every heart is in this sweet grace, let us not be discouraged. Let us put away from ourselves and others the stumbling-blocks that lie in the way of our descent into this safe and lovely valley. Let us learn a just and pure language in speaking of the world;—of its honours, power, and wealth; of all its busy pursuits and ensnaring pleasures. How earnest on this subject are the divine monitions! "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the

world is the enemy of God." "For God knoweth the hearts: that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

"Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Avoid all harsh judgments and condemnation of your fellow-creatures. "Be merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful." "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." How then should we fear to stir the ambient air,—a type of his all-pervading Spirit,—by the breath of words, at once the effect and the cause of "envyings, hatreds, emulations, wrath, strifes, whisperings, backbitings, swellings, tumults." Rather let us "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." In this spirit we shall not be satisfied with that negative kind of charity, which simply avoids injury to the honour, the happiness, or the feelings of our neighbours; but we shall endeavour, by all the aids of wisdom and of love, to fit our converse to the varied purposes of benefit and

delight. Every lesson gathered from experience will enable us more skilfully and successfully to instruct the ignorant, to warn the unwary, and to comfort the afflicted; to strengthen the feeble-minded, confirm the wavering, and provoke the supine to love and to good works. When we see the sensitive mind, pining in seclusion, murmuring and fainting beneath the withered gourd, we shall, with a heart full of tender sympathy, and words full of grace, seek to give fresh tone and vigour to the morbid spirit. Where the busy and the happy join in social scenes, we shall meet them with the words of welcome and generous confidence. The stream of friendly converse shall flow pure, and bright, and cheerily, as

“ — where the waters run  
Crystal, and warm and glittering,  
O'er the pebbles in the sun.”

The only perfect model of conversation is the Great Teacher, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. In him was no guile. Innocence and simplicity, combined with all that was lovely and graceful, caused his words to drop like the rain, and to distil as

the dew. With wisdom infinite, and condescension becoming his greatness, he adapted all his discourse to the habits, the circumstances, and the character of his hearers. The lilies of the field, the seed of the husbandman, the flocks of the pasture, and the stars of the firmament,—all served to unfold and illustrate the lessons of divine wisdom and goodness. Every passing event, every employment of man, and every dictate of natural prudence was transmuted by him into a lesson of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. The grass and the flowers on which he gazed, and of which he spake, are faded and gone, but his words endure for ever. They still shine in the beauty of holiness, and are fresh with the dew of everlasting youth.

The secret of all this grace is love. The ancient philosopher said of God, “Truth is his substance, and light is his shadow.” The sacred oracles teach us a far higher and more endearing lesson. They record that “God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Redemption has sealed this glorious truth, in tragic characters, by the cross of Christ,—that cross,



“Clasped by despairing hands, and laved  
By the warm tears of nations saved.”

The universe is filled with this love, and all things seem designed to whisper the truth, even to our outward sense. Infinite wisdom decrees that man, upon the earth, shall walk by faith, and not by sight. But infinite love yearns to reveal the secret of immortality, and to make known the things prepared for them that love him. All nature is full of echoes from the everlasting hills, and of the shadows of things unseen. “The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.”







